

# *Cambridgeport Neighborhood Study*

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*Summary, Recommendations and Action Plan*

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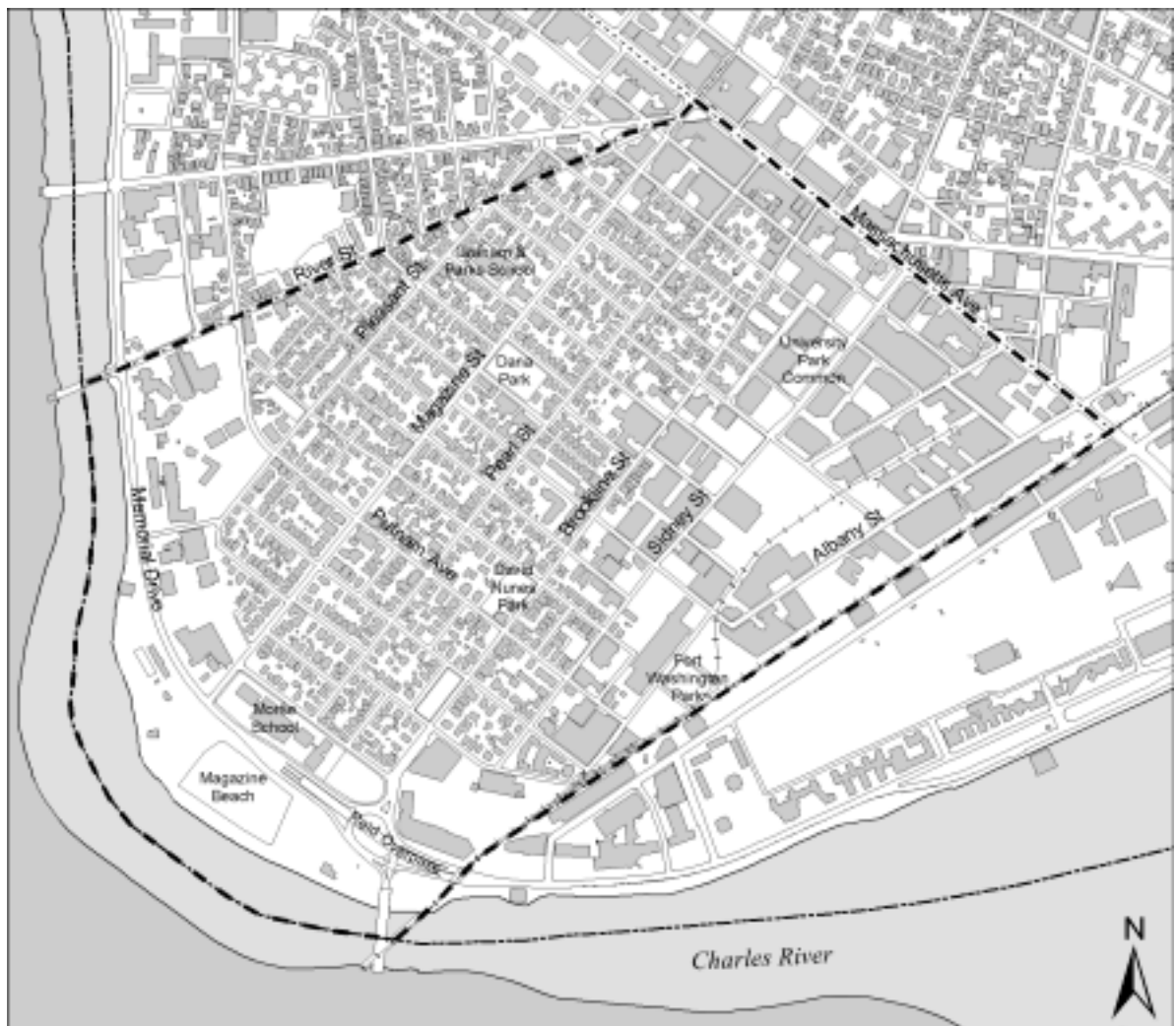
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## *S u m m a r y*

*City of Cambridge*  
*Cambridgeport Neighborhood Boundaries*



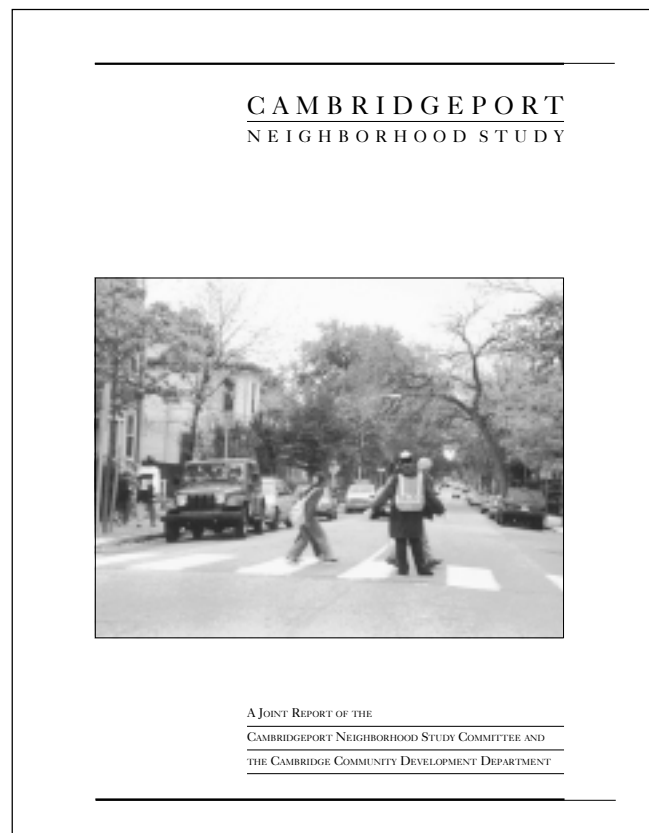
### **Neighborhood Studies**

During the 1980s, the City of Cambridge (along with the surrounding region), witnessed a wave of commercial growth and economic development. This growth expanded the City's tax base and created new jobs and opportunities for residents. While many residents welcomed this prosperity, it also brought about an increasing awareness of issues that are of concern to neighborhood residents: increased building density, traffic congestion and parking problems, the rising cost of housing, inadequate open space, and the threat to neighborhood character and quality of life.

Since 1988, the Community Development Department (CDD), through its neighborhood planning program, has conducted comprehensive studies in ten of the city's neighborhoods. The goal of the neighborhood studies is to analyze each neighborhood in terms of assets and needs, and provide recommendations to address residents' concerns. The recommendations from each study were formed with the guidance of an appointed study committee and deal with issues such as: traffic and parking; housing affordability and homeownership; neighborhood commercial areas and employment; park maintenance; and areas that are inappropriately zoned and may need rezoning. The recommendations have been, where appropriate, incorporated into the work programs and budgets of City departments for implementation.

### **Neighborhood Study Updates**

To ensure that the neighborhood studies remain current and useful, each study is updated to review changed circumstances such as demographics, housing conditions, the economic situation, desires of residents, city policies and programs, and needed actions. As part of the neighborhood study update process community members are invited to comment on the original study recommendations, suggest new items, and prioritize issues. In conjunction with the community component of the update process, city staff created an action plan based on the progress of the original recommendations as well as new issues that were identified by residents. The result is a Neighborhood Study Update with Summary, Recommendations and Action Plan, which is made available to the public, City Council members, and city staff. The Community Development Department intends to update each neighborhood study and action plan approximately every three to five years.

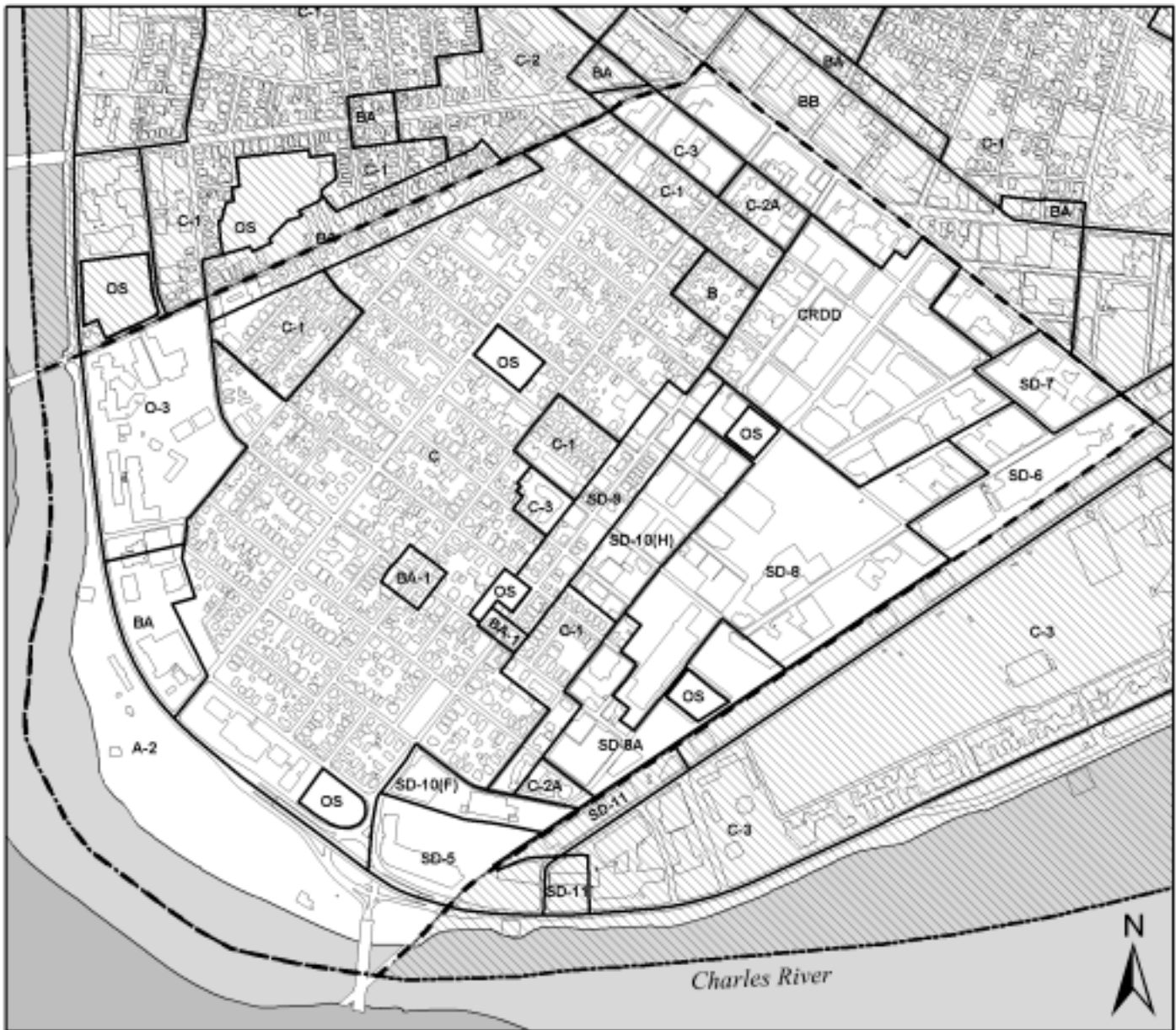


### **Cambridgeport Study Update Summary, Recommendations, and Action Plan**

The Cambridgeport Neighborhood Study Committee met for 24 months from February 1997 to January 1999. The Neighborhood Study process included a series of four neighborhood forums to discuss the study topic areas. The committee developed specific recommendations for the neighborhood regarding: Housing, Land Use and Zoning, Urban Design, Transportation, Open Space and Economic Development. The completed Study was published in May 2000. Since that time a number of the recommendations have been completed, are underway, remain as future action items for the city, or call for no action at this time.

The Cambridgeport Neighborhood Study Update Summary, Recommendations, and Action Plan 2003, is a report back to residents and city staff on the recommendations made by the Cambridgeport Neighborhood Study Committee in the original study, the progress to date on the actions identified by the city, and an action plan for the future. The Cambridgeport Neighborhood Study Update process consisted of a series of community meetings including a specific meeting on traffic and transportation issues in the neighborhood. The report takes into account new recommendations from





*Cambridgeport Zoning Map*

public meetings as well as, demographic shifts, updated housing and economic data, and new city policies and programs.

### ***History of the Cambridgeport Neighborhood***

Since the founding of the City of Cambridge in 1630 up until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Cambridgeport neighborhood was primarily agricultural. The construction of the West Boston Bridge (where the Longfellow Bridge now stands) in 1793 created new commercial opportunities for the area including the possibility of a port, giving the neighborhood its name. Although a port was never built in the area, the neighborhood developed as a residential suburb and was an important link between Boston and the farming communities of Middlesex County. It was the industrial

and residential growth of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, that gave Cambridgeport much of the form and character prevalent today. Since World War II, the expansion of MIT and the related redevelopment of Kendall Square and University Park have brought profound changes to the eastern part of the district, as heavy industry and manufacturing facilities continue to be replaced by office and laboratory space.

### ***Cambridgeport Today***

The original Cambridgeport Neighborhood Study utilized demographic data from the 1990 U.S. Census. As the update process began, a portion of U.S. Census data for the year 2000 was becoming available. Where available, 2000 U.S. Census data is used. The table above compares some of the 2000 U.S. Census data

## Demographic Information for Cambridgeport and the City of Cambridge, 1990 and 2000

	Cambridgeport			City of Cambridge		
	1990	2000	% Change	1990	2000	% Change
Total Population	9,100	10,052	10.5%	95,802	101,355	5.8%
Area	0.53 square miles			6.36 square miles		
Persons per sq mile	17,170	18,966	10.5%	15,063	15,936	5.8%
Households	4,203	4,598	9.4%	39,337	42,615	8.3%
Family Households	1,744	1,787	2.5%	17,648	17,595	-0.3%
Non-Family Households	2,459	2,811	14.3%	21,689	25,020	15.4%
Housing units	4,430	4,760	7.4%	41,979	44,725	6.5%
Owner-Occupied	1,070	1,266	18.3%	11,959	13,760	15.1%
Renter-Occupied	3,107	3,332	7.2%	27,446	28,855	5.1%
Vacant	253	162	-36.0%	2,574	2,110	-18.0%

Source: U.S. Census 1990, U.S. Census 2000, and City of Cambridge Community Development Department

available at the neighborhood and municipal levels with data from the 1990 Census. The population of Cambridgeport increased by over 10% between 1990 and 2000, twice the rate of the City of Cambridge. During the same period, the number of households and housing units increased by comparable rates for the City and the Cambridgeport neighborhood. In addition to new demographic data available with the 2000 U.S. Census, there have been a number of significant new initiatives and projects that have taken place in Cambridgeport and the City as a whole since the completion of the original Cambridgeport neighborhood study. Some of the new programs that directly affect the Cambridgeport neighborhood are summarized below.

In 2001 the City of Cambridge adopted a **Citywide Rezoning Petition** that included significant changes to the city's zoning ordinance. Among the changes is a new public process for the review of new developments greater than 50,000 square feet throughout the city, to involve the community and provide guidelines that encourage built character consistent with the neighborhood. Similar standards are applied in an administrative review for projects between 20,000 and 50,000 square feet.

In November of 2001, Cambridge voters approved the **Community Preservation Act (CPA)**. The CPA will make a total of 13.5 million local and state dollars available during FY2002 and FY2003 for affordable housing, open space, and historic preservation in Cambridge. An appointed committee, which heard testimony at a public hearing in April of 2002, determined that 80% of the funds from the CPA should be devoted to the creation of affordable housing, while 10% should be devoted to open space and historic preservation respectively.

During the Cambridgeport Neighborhood Study process, City Council approved an **Inclusionary Zoning** amendment to the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance, which sets aside 15% of units in new housing developments as affordable to middle and low income residents and families. The City has also recently begun a **Middle Income Homebuyer Assistance Program**. The program provides grants or low interest loans to Cambridge residents with incomes up to 120% of the area median to purchase a home in the City.

In the fall of 1999, the City and the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) reached an agreement to **renovate Magazine Beach** and facilities. The City has agreed to provide funding for the renovations and maintenance of the facility. In return, the MDC agreed to grant Cambridge youth athletic teams priority in scheduling of games. Construction is expected to begin in the fall of 2003. The **Green Ribbon Open Space**



**Committee** produced a report in March of 2000, which outlined criteria established for the purchase of land to be used as open space. Since the original study, the City has designated more than \$2 million in funds towards the purchase of open space.

In 2002, the design plans for the **Cambridgeport Roadways Project** were completed. Yearly traffic monitoring is also included as part of the project, which is expected to go into construction in the spring of 2003. The **EZ Ride Shuttle** has recently been established and travels between North Station, Kendall Square, and Cambridgeport including stops on Sidney Street at University Park; and, as a result of interest expressed in one of the update public meetings, Sidney and Erie Streets; and Brookline and Erie Streets. This service will be used to guide further efforts to provide

publicly accessible shuttle services.

The City along with surrounding communities, MassHighway, trucking associations, the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) and MAPC completed a **Regional Truck Study** in the summer of 2002. Cambridge City Council has also recommended changing the existing through-truck ordinance. As of fall 2002, the City's Ordinance Committee and Planning Board are discussing the issue.

All of the changes noted above are incorporated into the Cambridgeport Neighborhood Study Update and are described in greater detail throughout the following report where applicable. These changes along with the original recommendations and progress to date provide the framework for the Cambridgeport Neighborhood Study Update, Recommendations, and Action Plan.